DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 761 SP 041 666

AUTHOR	Koutsoulis, Michalis
TITLE	The Characteristics of the Effective Teacher in Cyprus Public High School: The Students' Perspective.
PUB DATE	2003-04-00
NOTE	11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 21-25, 2003).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Foreign Countries; High School Students; *Interpersonal Communication; Public Schools; *Secondary Education; Student Attitudes; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Competencies; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Student Relationship ; Teaching Skills
IDENTIFIERS	*Cyprus

ABSTRACT

This study examined the teacher characteristics that students considered important in defining teacher effectiveness, focusing on human characteristics, communication skills, and teaching and production characteristics. Students from 25 high schools in Cyprus completed the Classroom Culture Description Questionnaire. Overall, students listed 94 different characteristics of effective teachers. The most commonly listed human characteristic was the ability to show understanding, followed by teacher friendliness. The most frequently noted communication characteristic was the ability to communicate effectively with students and to handle teacher-student relations. This was followed by effective classroom management. Regarding teaching ability, most students wanted lessons to be interesting and motivating. Students at different achievement levels understood teacher effectiveness differently. Students with the lowest achievement focused more on human characteristics and teaching skills and less on communication skills. High achievers wanted their teachers to be knowledgeable and clever and to not spend time on comments about students' behavior. (Contains 11 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 478 761

The Characteristics of the Effective Teacher in Cyprus Public High School: The Students' Perspective

Michalis Koutsoulis

2003

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Michalis Koutsoulis

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

SP041666

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Title: The characteristics of the effective teacher in Cyprus public high school: the students' perspective

Authors: Michalis Koutsoulis, Intercollege, Lefkosia, Cyprus

PAPER PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
CHICAGO, APRIL, 2003

Teachers play an important role for positive interaction with the students by the way they present themselves to the students. For her presentation the teacher should bare in mind students' previous experiences from preschool to high school, and align her behavior with the existing culture that shapes the relationship between teacher and students, and between adult and children in a given society that she functions (Hargreaves, 1995). Which characteristics of the teacher the students consider as positive and which characteristics produce more is a question that the teacher has to search in a continuous inquiry in her effort to satisfy students' needs and be accepted by them, creating an emotionally positive and academically productive atmosphere in the classroom.

Teacher's behavior should be in balance between the two edges of each characteristic of her behavior. For example a teacher can be considered as friendly or loose and the fine line that discriminates the two dimensions of teacher's friendliness is something that the teacher should define, without the danger her students misunderstand that behavior. This line is transposed from culture to culture and from time to time in conjunction with the family culture of each student, as well as the goals of each student (Wilson & Wilson, 1992), the composition of the classroom (Burns & Mason, 2002), its' culture (Hargreaves, 1995) and several other factors that teacher should be aware of. The teacher is balancing between antithetical dimensions of each characteristic in an effort not to allow students to misinterpret her behavior.

Several scholars suggest that the teacher should not be "scared" to be friendly with the students in her effort to get their commitment to participate in the learning procedure (Xohellis, 1997; Monganett (1995). It is important for the teacher to be closer to the student and show interest for his/her personal emotional world (Foote, Vermette, Wisniewski, Agnello & Pegano, 2000). Of course the definition for every teacher characteristic remains open to students' interpretation and

SP041666

is vulnerable to the cultural definitions of each group of students and in relation to other teaching or personal characteristics of the teachers as human interaction is taken in a context and not in parts.

Another important characteristic is the helpful teacher. The helpfulness of the teacher can start from assistance when they do their independent work and letting them find the solution by themselves and can go in providing to the students ready made solutions. Teacher enthusiasm is also a variable that appears to be very important that constructs outstanding teaching (Check, 1999). As Patrick, Hilsey and Kempler (2000) set it "when a teacher exhibits greater evidence of enthusiasm students are more likely to be interested, energetic, curious and excited about learning" (p.15). Neil (1991) indicated that due to the fact that learning is a voluntary activity, teacher's job to "sell" ideas to the students is very hard if he cannot "sell" those ideas in an interesting way. Therefore when the teacher shows enthusiasm about her topic she persuades the students that the topic is important. Enthusiasm is communicated to students with several non-verbal cues and informs them on how teachers like or dislike what they do, if they are happy to be with them etc.

Being fair and non-judgmental is another very important characteristic of the effective teacher (Blackledge & Hunt, 1995; Xohellis, 1997). Teachers are under continuous scrutiny from their students whether they treat them fairly as they expect from their teachers to be the role models of what they teach. Another characteristic that has been studied thoroughly is the democratic versus the autocratic teacher, which appears that nowadays for the teacher to be democratic is not negotiable even though the definition of being democratic is also changing. Even though there aren't tremendous differences on students' achievement between the democratic and the autocratic teacher it is argued that the democratic teacher provides the students with positive attitudes towards learning (Kubow & Kinney, 2000).

Objectives

The focus on this study is to examine the teacher characteristics, which students consider as important in order to define the effective teacher in a specific cultural setting were the educational system is very centralized. Specifically the study examines three basic categories of those characteristics:

- Human characteristics of the teacher
- Communication skills characteristics, and
- Teaching and production characteristics

- Students' responses are compared with the problems that students claim that face at school in an attempt to examine if there is a connection between those problems and the teacher characteristics they consider important
- Finally the effort is to examine if low achieving students define the effective teacher differently than the high achieving students

Educational importance of the study

The present study can inform the teachers that are on the field on how students understand the characteristics of the effective teacher. Are students interested in the teacher that takes care of the emotional-human interactions in the classroom or are they interested in the teacher that produces results? The description of the effective teacher from the students helps the teacher to understand what the student expects from the teacher and this way we can have "peace" in the relations between students and teachers. It is a belief that students get clear messages from our production-oriented society in various ways, they understand school as part of this society and they want school to work towards production rather towards emotions. Of course, in the classroom the teacher must possess both characteristics in order to be successful. Also this research can add to the discussion for the definition of teacher effectiveness, as until now we haven't considered the students' point of view.

Methods and Data Source

The study was conducted with self-administered anonymous questionnaires. For the purpose of this study, a stratified random selection of 25 classrooms of 608 students within five high schools in Cyprus was selected. All students that participated in the study attended their last year in high school during 1999-2000 school year. For the selection of the data the *Classroom Culture Description Questionnaire (CCDQ)* was designed to study classroom culture during three basic subject matter areas – math, science and language. Here we present only the results of two open questions. The one question is asking for the characteristics of the effective teacher and the other one asks for the problems that students face in school. Students had the opportunity for multiple responses. The grade point average (GPA) for the first third of the current academic year 1999-2000, the GPA for the 1998-99 academic year and the grade and test results on the three subject areas, and five (5) demographic characteristics were also included in the instrument.

Statistical Analyses:

The results were analyzed in a qualitative format. The effort was to detect characteristics that fall within the three basic categories that were initially hypothesized. The frequency that each characteristic was mentioned is also presented in the results.

Results and conclusions

Results

Teacher characteristics are categorized into three groups: Human characteristic, communication skills characteristics, and teaching and production characteristics.

Table 1. The human characteristics of the high school teacher.

Understanding, love, friendliness, fairness, humanism, and interest for the students	**Sample**	**% of responses**	**% of cases**
Understanding. Listen to the students. Discuss the problems and the concerns of the students. Understand students' feelings and needs	163	12.8	27.6
Friendly, to create a climate of friendliness in the classroom. Be our friend	81	6.4	13.7
Accessible, approachable to the students	37	2.9	6.3
Kindness. With good behavior towards students, with good character	32	2.5	5.4
Being patient	30	2.4	5.1
Fair. Fair with all, objective, frank, with consciousness	24	1.8	3.9
Being human above all. Behave with humanism	15	1.2	2.5
Being interesting for all students	15	1.2	2.5
Love the students. Behave with love to the students. *Not to hate students*	8	.7	1.3
Trustful	4	.3	.7
Polite	3	.2	.5
Feel responsible to the student	2	.2	.3
Not being sarcastic to the students	2	.2	.3
Total	**415**	**32.8**	**70.0**

About two thirds of the students referred to characteristics of human approach of the teacher. Within this first category the most frequently mentioned characteristic was the ability of the teacher to show understanding as 25% of the students referred to this need. Studying the problems that students face at school it appears that the lack of understanding was the second frequent problem of the students (the first was the pressure from the school). Another characteristic that was mentioned from the 14% of students was that the teacher should be friendly. Other characteristics that students referred in this category are: kind, trustful, patient, fair, loving the students, etc.

Table 2. Communication skills characteristics

	Sample	% of responses	% of cases
Effective communication with students			
Able to communicate with the students. Have good relations with the students. To discuss with the students, advice them, and outside the classroom. Open and ready to discuss with them free for any topic. *Accept student' opinions and their disagreements…*	79	6.2	13.4
Cooperative. Being able to cooperate with student	64	5.0	10.8
Respect all students and not underestimate them. Accept all the students	45	3.5	7.6
Make you feel successful and strong	1	.1	.2
Not to see the student as the mark on the tests (but as a personality)	1	.1	.2
On control or loose			
On control. Knows how to keep the control of the classroom. Strict, but fair. Keep the classroom without noise.	33	2.6	5.6
Not too strict, not autocratic. Not hot-tempered. Not to get angry for the smallest thing. Not to try to impose control by yelling. Not being dictatorial. Not to think he/she is a policeman. Not being cold	30	2.3	5.1
Not spend the time on students' remarks. Not to report students to the principal	3	.2	.5
Be tolerant but not to be "victim" of the students	2	.2	.3
Democratic	2	.2	.3
Not to care of what students do in the classroom	1	.1	.2
Not being impartial			
Not to discriminate. Not to have stereotypes against students and behave to them differently. Judge the students according to his/her personality and not according to his/her relatives. Not to give higher marks to teachers' children. Work with all the students and not only with the clever ones. Or those that sit in the front sits	56	4.4	9.5
Proper behavior and respect the students			
Have good tempered all the time, being happy, cheerful, calm, smiling	32	2.5	5.4
Have good behavior to the students. Respect the students. To teach like he/she is teaching his/her own kids	24	1.9	4.1
Provide more interest to the weak students. Not to underestimate the students that are not "good"	6	.5	1.0
Not insulting students	7	.6	1.2
Give second chances to students	2	.2	.3
Not expect students to just being silent in the classroom	2	.2	.3
Being good student	1	.1	.2
Not to compare us with the other classrooms	1	.1	.2
Not to blackmail the students with expel	1	.1	.2
Not to yell at students when they make a mistake. Not to condemn students	1	.1	.2
Total	**394**	**31.2**	**66.8**

Also two thirds of the students referred to the characteristics of communication skills of the teacher. About 13% of them call for the need for effective communication and handling of the relations between the teacher and the students. About 10% of the students believe that the teacher should be able to control the classroom in an effective way (effective classroom management). Also students believe that the effective teacher should be in a good mood and behave to the students in a good way. Other characteristics that students mentioned are: not to discriminate students, democratic, cooperative, appreciate students' abilities, not to use irony against the students etc.

Table 3. Teaching and production characteristics

Production	Sample	% of responses	% of cases
Production. Teaching his/her lesson correctly. To use effective teaching methods. Doing the lesson understandable. *Teaching in an interesting way without being boring and waste the time*	115	9.0	19.5
Communicative. Knows how to communicate to the students his/her love that has for the lesson	43	3.4	7.3
Hard-working. With desire and love for his/her job. Willing to teach. Above all to love his/her job	22	1.7	3.7
Try to improve students' achievement. Work for the best of the students	9	.7	1.5
To have as his/her main goal students' learning and not to waste the time. To make sure that students know the lesson and especially before the test	2	.2	.3
To be alive in the classroom so students won't be bored. Not to be gloomy	2	.2	.3
To repeat things that we didn't understand	1	.1	.2
Not to have students' grade as the main goal but students' learning	1	.1	.2
Not to focus only on the subject matter	3	.2	.5
More work in the classroom	1	.1	.2
Allow students not to do anything in the classroom if this is their choice	5	.4	.8
Not to give us a lot of homework	1	.1	.2
With humor and interest – to challenge student' motives			
Do the lesson with humor, being pleasant and entertaining. Being happy. *Get into the classroom smiling*	63	4.9	10.7
Not to teach "dry knowledge"	14	1.1	2.4
Make the lesson easy, understandable and interesting without make you feel tired	11	.9	1.9
Do the lesson with the students in a discussion between the teacher and the students	7	.6	1.2
Do the lesson without blackmail	7	.6	1.2
Not being dull "living in his/her own world"	6	.5	1.0
Keep the students alert. Make student to be "thirty" for learning	3	.2	.5
Knowledgeable			
To be knowledgeable. Educated. Know almost everything on hi/her subject	35	2.7	6.0
Organized. Well prepared	2	.2	.3
Experienced	3	.2	.5
Helpful			
Helpful. To really want to help the students	19	1.5	3.2
Grading			
Flexible in grading	22	1.7	3.7
Being flexible in marking when is necessary	12	.9	2.0
Being fair in grading	8	.7	1.3
Reward students for their effort not only for the test scores	1	.1	.2
Not to judge a student from one test	1	.1	.2
Total	**419**	**33.1**	**70.8**

About 71% of the students referred to characteristics of production and teaching ability of the teacher. Students want the lesson to be interesting and improve students' motivation. Only 7% of the students mentioned the grading ability of the teacher. Other characteristics that students mentioned are: helpful, organized, work-oriented, goal-oriented, caring for students' learning, etc.

Table 4. The group with the lowest achievement measures (Economics, Central high school of Lefkosia in Acropolis)

Responses	Sample	% of responses	% of cases
Human characteristics			
Understanding	5	10.9	22.7
Have a good temper	3	6.5	13.6
Friendly	3	6.5	13.6
Frank	3	6.5	13.6
Good hard, good character, good manners, polite	2	4.3	9.1
Patient	2	4.3	9.1
Not to see student from above (not to underestimate them)	1	2.2	4.5
Approachable	1	2.2	4.5
Express interest for all students	1	2.2	4.5
To love student	1	2.2	4.5
Communication skills characteristics			
Cooperative	3	6.5	13.6
Communicate with student	1	2.2	4.5
Teaching and production characteristics			
Production	7	15.2	31.8
Make the lesson joyful. Not to teach "dry" knowledge	2	4.3	9.1
Flexible with grading	3	6.5	13.6
Hard-working	2	4.3	9.1
Experienced	2	4.3	9.1
Communicative	1	2.2	4.5
On-control	1	2.2	4.5
Do the lesson with discussion between student and the teacher	1	2.2	4.5
Total	**45**	**100.0**	**204.6**

As it is clear here the students with the lower achievement score focus more on the human characteristics of the teacher and the characteristics of teaching and production, while on the communication skills characteristics are referring in a smaller frequency.

Table 5. The group with the higher achievement scores. (science group, central school in Lemesos, Lanitio)

Response	Sample	% of responses	% of cases
Human characteristics			
Understanding	5	10.9	25.0
Have good temper	2	4.3	10.0
Friendly	2	4.3	10.0
Respect all students, not to underestimate them	2	4.3	10.0
Approachable	2	4.3	10.0
Democratic	2	4.3	10.0
Good hard, human	2	4.3	10.0
Fair	1	2.2	5.0
Patient	1	2.2	5.0
Love the students	1	2.2	5.0
Communication skills characteristics			
Communicate effectively with students,	1	2.2	5.0
Teaching and production characteristics			
Knowledgeable	7	15.2	35.0
Productive	4	8.7	20.0
Communicative	4	8.7	20.0
Cooperative	3	6.5	15.0
Make the lesson easy	1	2.2	5.0
Fair in grading	1	2.2	5.0
Able to control the classroom	1	2.2	5.0
To love what he/she does	1	2.2	5.0
Being clever	1	2.2	5.0
More work in the classroom	1	2.2	5.0
Not to waste the time on remarks	1	2.2	5.0
Total	**46**	**100.0**	**230.0**

Comparing the responses of the students in one high and one low achieving group it appears that in the high achieving group the need for the teacher to be knowledgeable, clever and not to spend time on comments for students' behavior. In the low achieving group students referred to the need to be more understanding in grading and not to underestimate the students. Results show that students in different achievement levels do understand teacher effectiveness differently.

(a) Conclusions

In conclusion as a body students are looking for the superman-teacher giving about 94 different characteristics of the effective teacher. Students need humanistic approach, production and communication skills to be hold from the teachers simultaneously. The problem is if the teachers are able to provide this model-teacher as the major concern of the curriculum is the coverage of certain subject matter. Can the researcher infer from students' responses and conclude that students ask for the characteristics that they don't have? It appears that students need love along with work, they need understanding, they need effective communication. Also students want

teachers that are able to control the classroom, while grading for them is a secondary matter. We must admit that students as a group are able to give educators constructive suggestions for the effective teacher

References

Blackledge, D. & Hunt, B. (1995). *Sociological interpretations of education*. London: Routledge.

Burns, R. B & Mason, D. A. (2002). Class composition and student achievement in elementary schools. *American Educational Research Journal, 39(1)*, 207-233.

Check, J. F. (1999). The perceptions of their former teachers by older adults. *Education, 120*, 168-173.

Foote, C., Vermette, P., Wisniewski, S., Agnello, A., & Pegano, C. (2000). The characteristics of bad high school teachers reveal avoidable behaviors for new teachers. *Education, 121*, 128-138.

Hargreaves, D. H. (1995). School culture, school effectiveness and school improvement. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 6(1)*, 23-46.

Kubow, P. K. & Kinney, M. B. (2000). Fostering Democracy in Middle School Classrooms: Insights from a Democratic Institute in Hungary. *The Social Studies, 91*, 65-75.

Monganett, L. (1995). Ten tips for improving teacher-student relationships. *Social Education, 59*, 27-29.

Neill, S. (1991). Classroom nonverbal communication. London: Routledge.

Patrick, B. C., Hilsey, J., & Kempler, T. (2000). "What's everybody so excited about?": The effects of teacher enthusiasm on student intrinsic motivation and vitality. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 68*, 217-230.

Xohellis, P. D. (1997). Introduction to pedagogics: Fundamental problems of education. Thessaloniki: Kiriakides.

Wilson, P. M., & Wilson, J. R. (1992). Environmental influences on adolescent educational aspirations: A logistic transform model. Youth & Society, 24, 52-70.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
(OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

Reproduction Release

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: The characteristics of the effective teacher in Cyprus public high schools: the students' perspectives	
Author(s): Michalis Kontsoulis	
Corporate Source: Intercollege	Publication Date:

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign in the indicated space following.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED SAMPLE TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Level 1	Level 2A	Level 2B
↑ ☑	↑ ☐	↑ ☐
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic) *and* paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche on

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche, or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: Michalis Kontsoulis.	Printed Name/Position/Title: MICHALIS KOUTSOULIS, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, Ed.D.

Organization/Address:	Telephone:	Fax:
Intercollege Makedonitissas 46, P.O.Box 24005 Leftkia 1700 CYPRUS	357-22-357661	357-22-357665
	E-mail Address: kutsulis@hotmail.com	Date: 5.5.2003

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:	
ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation **1129 Shriver Laboratory (Bldg 075)** **College Park, Maryland 20742**	**Telephone: 301-405-7449** **Toll Free: 800-464-3742** **Fax: 301-405-8134** **ericae @ericae.net** **http://ericae.net**